Chapter 7

John Neal and John Dunn Hunter

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Late in his 1869 autobiography, *Wandering Recollections of a Somewhat Busy Life*, John Neal introduces a distinction that might seem important in any autobiography. Substantial truth is not the same thing as circumstantial truth, Neal asserts, and the former is clearly more important, not least because attaining the latter is well-nigh impossible. He illustrates with an odd little story:

> Not long ago, eight or ten years perhaps, I wrote a magazine-article, which had something to do with coincidences. [. . .] In the article referred to, I stated that on the first morning after my arrival in London, I stopped to look at some letters I had with me, near the bronze equestrian statue of Charles I., at Charing-Cross; that I selected one addressed to Mr. Charles Toppan, with Messrs. Perkins and Co., say No. 431 Fleet-Street, having business with Mr. P. about a newly-invented engine of prodigious power. As I looked up, a stranger was passing, of whom I inquired the way to Fleet-Street. "I am going that way myself," said he, "and will show you." After a while, he stopped, and said, "This is Fleet-Street; I am going no further. What number do you want?"—"No. 481."—"This is 481. Whom are you looking for?"—"Mr. Charles Toppan, the engraver," said I. "That is my name," said he. Now, when I wrote that article, I honestly believed I was telling the simple truth, as a part of my own experience. Judge of my amazement, when I heard from my daughter in New-York, that Mr. Toppan had mentioned the subject, and assured her that the strange coincidence happened not to me, but to Mr. John Dunn Hunter, the author of "Hunter's Captivity among the Indians!" How are we to explain this, supposing Mr. Toppan to be right, and I wrong? I did carry a letter to him at Mr. Perkins's, or to Mr. Perkins himself. I did take my letters out to look at them, the first morning after my arrival, and I did this near the statue of King Charles, at Charing-Cross; and I did personally deliver the letter to Mr. Toppan, or to Mr. Perkins, I forget which. Hunter had lodgings in the same house with me, in Warwick-Street, Pall-Mall. Of course, I must have had the story from one or both; and when I came to illustrate, like the fellow who got drunk on temperance for illustration, while his brother was lecturing on temperance, my whole attention was fixed on the main point, as a wonderful coincidence, that a stranger, among a population of more than a million, should accost another stranger at sight, to inquire the way, and find him to be the very man he wanted. If I had only Hunter's word to rely on, I should be ashamed to repeat the story; but Mr. Toppan, being the very man so accosted, confirms it as related. Here I had given the *substantial* truth, which was all I undertook to do; but how widely I had wandered from the circumstantial truth![1]

Neal's final word choice here invites reflection on how this story emblematizes his entire autobiographical endeavor, those "wandering recollections." While John Dunn Hunter's role may initially appear merely incidental to Neal's *substantial* point, it is not. Nearly a half-century after meeting John Dunn Hunter in London in 1823, Neal is still working through the issues Hunter's life and story brought up for him.

At bottom, the anecdote from *Wandering Recollections* concerns identity, and the way in which memory, writing, and print, in underpinning identity, can also undermine it. Neal has appropriated a coincidence that happened to another and remembered it (and written about it) as something that happened to him. The coincidence itself turns on the strange ways in which writing (personal letters, but also magazine articles), in the very errancy it produces

(wandering from the circumstantial truth, wandering from Charing Cross to Fleet Street), actually ends up confirming identity. Jacques Lacan liked to say that a letter always reaches its destination, and something like that is at work in this little story that could be titled "How Mr. Toppan Got his Mail." But the letter's arrival, as in Lacan, must pass through misdirection and blindness, and this double structure also applies to the moral Neal draws from the story, namely that truth telling and error are inextricably intertwined, the (substantial) truth structured in and as a (circumstantial) fiction.[2] How can Neal stabilize such a contradictory message? How can he pass himself off as in control of the very distinction between substantial truth and circumstantial error the story exposes him as failing to perceive? Here the figure of Hunter is essential. Neal's appropriation of Hunter's experience is somehow made safe by the insinuation that "Hunter's word" is in its essence unreliable: "If I had only Hunter's word to rely on, I should be ashamed to repeat the story," Neal says. True to form, Neal capitalizes on falsehood to advance a claim to truth. This operation requires a sacrifice: Hunter. In becoming Hunter, he discards Hunter. This essay explores what is at stake, personally and ideologically, in Neal's relationship to Hunter.

The story of John Neal and John Dunn Hunter begins in 1824, soon after Neal arrived in London, and rented rooms at Mrs. Mary Halloway's at 7 Warwick Street, Charing Cross; Hunter lived above him.[3] "I was with [Hunter] every day," writes Neal in the *Monthly Magazine* for July 1826, "from February to June 1824—from early in February, up to the very day of his departure by the Liverpool coach,—up to the very moment, I should say; for I saw him off."[4] It was during this time, of course, that Neal began to write and publish for English magazines on all things American; the best-known of these publications is the series of five sketches for *Blackwood's* on "American Writers," which appeared between September 1824 and February 1825. Both Neal and Hunter appear in this series. Neal's treatment of his own work is reasonably well known, but it should be recalled here that even by the standards of *Blackwood's*, a journal that took pleasure in self-conscious play with pseudonymy, puffery, and scurrilous critique, Neal's performance here is brazen. As in the passage from *Wandering Recollections*, the entry on John Neal keeps up a steady drumbeat on the necessity of "truth," even as falsehood and deceit are everywhere acknowledged. "We know him well," observes Neal (as "X. Y. Z.") of John Neal. For this reason, he proposes to give John Neal's opinions on John Neal's works—"*precisely in his own words, and by his own desire*." Before we get Neal on Neal, however, we get a biographical sketch of Neal: "he was put into a retail shop, when about eleven or twelve years of age, where he learnt, he says, without his poor mother's knowledge, how to sell tape—lie—cheat—swear—and pass counterfeit money—if occasion required—as it would, sometimes, in a country, where that, which was counterfeit, and that, which was not, were exceedingly alike, not only in appearance, but in value." The entry continues with astonished celebrations of Neal's Herculean productivity—"a multitude of papers thrown off in a sort of transport: amounting to *fifteen* large English duodecimos"—as well as games about authorship: "No matter whose they are—mine or another's," writes Neal of his four anonymously published novels, "I shall neither acknowledge, nor deny them."[5] Neal reveals himself as a literary adventurer whose American experience leads him to understand

the power and value of counterfeit productions.

The same themes appear in Neal's treatment of Hunter. The first mention of Hunter focuses on his celebrity in England: "Nothing can be worse, for the stomach of this public, nor in much worse taste, than to dish up anything American—game or not game; wild meat,* or not—with a superabundance of sweet sauce . . ." The note to which the asterisk leads us reads: "As the late case of Mr. JOHN D. HUNTER—for example; of whom a word by and by."[6] In the entry dedicated to Hunter, Neal calls him an "honest fellow, at bottom," but one who, "spoiled by absurd attention here . . . forgot his part, as a North American savage, entirely, before he left us." The last mention is the most interesting of all: Neal uses a long and ambivalent treatment of Irving as an occasion to attack publishers: "These 'enterprizing publishers,' by the way, are a pleasant kind of adventurers, to be sure—very desperate." Craven and grasping, the publishers are also stupid: "This very publisher, too, refused Hunter's Narrative. It was published on account of the author. It succeeded."[7] These three brief notices of Hunter demonstrate that Neal saw his onetime housemate as engaged in a kind of literary adventurism, successfully leveraging a reputation as an "American savage," or "wild meat." Neal suggests that Hunter is finally playing "a part." In other words, Hunter is a version of Neal himself, and what is worse, a more successful version.

Hunter had become famous in both England and America following the publication of his life story, *Memoirs of a Captivity Among the Indians of North America* (1823). Hunter presents himself in his *Memoirs* as having been taken captive at two years of age, handed back and forth among a variety of Plains tribes, and having eventually made a break as a teenager, after he endangered himself with his host tribe by betraying a planned attack on some white traders. He makes his way to New Orleans, then to Cincinnati and the East Coast, where he meets Jefferson, and eventually to England, where he becomes the toast of London for a season, associating with Robert Owen and the Duke of Sussex, among others. While in England, Hunter actively canvassed for his plan to establish a "civilizing" settlement for Indians, and he wrote and published an addendum to his *Memoirs* outlining some of those ideas: "Reflections on the Different States and Conditions of Society; with the Outlines of a Plan to Ameliorate the Circumstances of the Indians of North America," a document influenced in part by his discussions with Robert Owen.

Not long after Hunter left England for America, he reunited with Owen, with whom he traveled down the Ohio River. Owen was on his way to take possession of the Rappite settlement of Harmonie (now New Harmony), in Indiana, there to begin his utopian experiment in planned living. Hunter continued on his way to East Texas, where eventually he had a hand in establishing, with Cherokee Chief Richard Fields and various white *empresarios* in the region of Nacogdoches, the "Red and White Republic of Fredonia."[8] This Republic, which proposed to divide much of Mexican Texas and New Mexico into Indian lands in the north and white lands in the south, might also be described as utopian in its aspirations, though the issues of sovereignty and international intrigue in these early days of the "Monroe Doctrine" make the players—Hunter included—look as much like filibusters as philanthropists: "In this remote world of East Texas," writes a modern historian, "where no clear national boundaries existed,

land ownership was unclear, and international commercial flows affected notions of geography, Mexico experienced the first serious challenge to its sovereignty."[9]

On December 21, 1826, a coalition of Anglo-Americans and Cherokees proclaimed a new nation called the *Republic of the Red and White Peoples*, also known to history as *The Republic of Fredonia*."[10] After a good deal of diplomatic jockeying in Mexico City between U.S., British, and Mexican representatives, Mexican forces took Nacogdoches, with the local support of *empresario* Stephen Austin. Fields was executed, and John Dunn Hunter met an ignominious end, as reported in the *American Mercury* in June 1827: "Mr. John Dunn Hunter, who has made himself so conspicuous as the author of 'Hunter's Narrative,' was recently shot by one of his two companions (Indians) at a creek where his horse had stopped to drink. He is said to have been the prime mover of the recent revolt in Texas."[11] *The New Hampshire Sentinel* used even stronger language, referring to Hunter's role in the "late unfortunate attempt to revolutionize Texas."[12]

Between 1824, when Hunter left England, and 1827, when he was murdered in Texas, his story and reputation had been under continuous assault, presumably without his knowledge. Neal's passing comment in "American Writers," that Hunter was in essence playing a role, turns out to have anticipated much stronger charges that Hunter was a thoroughgoing impostor, and had made up his *Memoirs* out of whole cloth.[13] Neal's 1826 essay in the *Monthly Magazine* is a central exhibit in this pamphlet war, and I will turn to it shortly. But before I do, I want simply to observe that the entire arc of Hunter's career conforms to the terms in which Neal initially described him. All of Hunter's political engagements have a somewhat improvised quality, as if he is making it up on the fly. Hunter's behavior seems to occupy an ambiguous location halfway between high-minded philanthropic entrepreneurship (à la his friend Owen) and rough-and-tumble filibustering of the kind common in antebellum America, and that led him to keep company with such characters as the notorious Peter Ellis Bean.

Neal had described Hunter as a kind of literary adventurer, and it is worth observing that Hunter's political career and importance was amplified by the reception of this book. Whether Hunter was an impostor or not finally matters less than the fact that widespread doubt about precisely this issue kept his name before the public, and this reputation had the effect—"in a country, where that, which was counterfeit, and that, which was not, were exceedingly alike, not only in appearance, but in value"—of aggrandizing his importance. It is telling that modern historian Andrés Reséndez does not even mention Hunter in his treatment of the Republic of Fredonia, while contemporary newspapers suggested he was a "prime mover" of an effort at "revolutionizing" Texas.[14]

Let me return to the moment Neal met Hunter in 1824 as a way to get a running start on the 1826 article in the *Monthly Magazine*. As Neal notes in "American Writers," by the time he arrived in England, he had published (anonymously) four novels. One of these was the febrile *Logan: A Family History* (1822). The "Logan" of Neal's title is not, or not only, Jefferson's "Chief" Logan, the Mingo warrior famous for his plangent address at the conclusion of Lord Dunmore's War, but a man named George of Salisbury, who leaves England for North America in a kind of misanthropic spasm, marries into the last remnant of the Logan clan, assumes the

famous name, and fathers Harold, whom he thereafter instructs to exterminate the whites. The Byronic Harold—the central hero of Neal's novel—is thus a mixed-race visionary who travels to England to garner support—speaking even in the halls of Parliament—for his dream of establishing a secure homeland for the native tribes in America. When Neal encounters Hunter in England—a mixed-race figure (so Neal speculates in 1826) drumming up support in England on behalf of the Indians in North America, and enjoying access to the highest levels (not Parliament, but the Duke of Sussex)—he must have felt like he had just walked into his own novel. The question of priority doubtless nagged him: "Is Hunter my character or am I his?" The question of priority and paternity is a ceaselessly moving target in Neal. Having been published anonymously, *Logan* is itself a production the paternity of which Neal announces he can neither "acknowledge, nor deny."[15] To write a novel called *Logan* in 1822 is to attempt to capitalize on one of the legendary *patronymes* in Anglo-Indian history, and to do so knowing that this name had become a profoundly overdetermined site in which questions of authenticity and imposture, racial identity and cultural mixture, were hopelessly entangled.[16]

It is no surprise, therefore, that when Neal describes his experiences with Hunter in 1826, questions of racial background and Logan become important. Hunter had succeeded in England in no small part on the strength of his connections, and letters of support. Jefferson was reputed to be one of his supporters. "Very well—be it so," writes Neal, "but Mr. Jefferson could not know, and did not know whether our hero's story was true or not. Mr. Jefferson knows very little of the Indian character, and less of the Indian language—of any Indian language. There could be no better proof than the speech of Logan, which is repeated here on his authority, Logan the Mingo chief. It was altogether a humbug, that speech, and Mr. Jefferson is now aware of it; nay, I am not sure that he may not be charged with a part of it."[17] What is striking here is that the "humbug" of the speech cannot be traced with certainty to anyone; it might be said that we are in a zone beyond either confirmation or denial. Referring, presumably, to the attacks on the authenticity of the speech recorded by Jefferson in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Neal here implies two seemingly contradictory things: first, that Jefferson could have been duped, such that he can "now [be] aware of it"; second, that he contributed to the humbug, such that now he may "be charged with a part of it." The "humbug" has a kind of autonomy, it runs of itself, and it this that somehow makes it possible to be at once its victim and its progenitor.

These stories that run of themselves, that require both authors and consumers to catch up with them, are everywhere in Neal's response to Hunter. In the "American Writers" series, Neal had suggested that Hunter ceased "playing his part" as a savage before he left England, but by 1826, he changes his tack, arguing that Hunter played the part right to the end, played it precisely by seeming no longer to play it, and undertook the whole performance, moreover, because he *had* to! "[T]he hero of Hunter's Narrative . . . I believe in my heart, was obliged to persevere in the course of deception long and long after he would have given it up if he could." "I do believe," he continues, "that he would have withdrawn quietly from the career into which he had been forced by the unexpected favor which attended his book and story, if he could have done so, or if there had been a refuge for him on earth." But Hunter's story, Neal implies, was

now the property of others, who continued to humbug themselves precisely by imagining they were able to penetrate to the truth appearing in disguise. He ventriloquizes London society thus:

> Did he make himself ridiculous by playing the gentleman? It was to humour the prejudices of society. Did he overdo the part of Prince Le Boo? It was the beautiful brave nature of the man—the boldness of truth breaking through all disguise. Did he wear white kid gloves, neither wrong side out nor on the wrong hands, or go to court with a bag and sword, a chapeau under his arm, his hair powdered, and point-lace ruffles afloat over his huge paws (the whole hired for the show.) Then, how apt he was! How truly a North American savage! How altogether above the parade of savages, who go to court in their own hide and feathers![18]

The well-to-do in London now find a delectable authenticity not in hide and feathers but in the spectacle of a savage in point-lace ruffles, a well-meaning *effort* at civilized behavior.

Neal's performance in this long essay is self-serving, to be sure, but it is not without a certain psychological penetration. Neal's best guess is that Hunter is the child of a white trader and an Indian or part-Indian mother, that he was familiar with some linguistic and cultural usages of some Indian peoples, and probably an itinerant Methodist preacher to boot. Much as was the case in London, where "*nothing took so well . . . as to be out of the back-woods of America*," so too on the Eastern seaboard of America, Hunter had "found it to his advantage to be stared at," and "told a variety of stories about himself, partly true and partly false—going from one step to the next."[19] It is for all these reasons that Neal can make a judgment that otherwise seems confused and contradictory: "I profess to believe the man was a thorough-bred impostor, (made so by accident, however); his book a forgery, (though true in part, perhaps—true in part of somebody or other, I dare say)."[20] Once again we are in Neal's terrain in which different kinds of truth prevail, in which forgeries can be partly true, and imposture the result of accident.

Let us recall again what Neal says *à propos* his own early training cheating people in the retail business: the United States is a "country, where that, which was counterfeit, and that, which was not, were exceedingly alike, not only in appearance, but in value."[21] If such a remark has a grain of seriousness to it—a partly true forgery?—then it has to do with a certain expedient relation to the notion of originality. If the counterfeit has some practical efficacy, if it has a value "exceedingly alike" to the real thing, that is not because the distinction between real and fake is forgotten, but rather that that distinction is itself subordinated to a notion of pragmatic efficacy. Perhaps Neal might say the counterfeit has a *substantial* truth, even if it doesn't have a *circumstantial* one. What I want to suggest now is that Neal, in his lifelong encounter with Hunter, is confronting just this complex set of issues about values and origins. Hunter appeared to offer an unnerving confirmation of his own views, and at stake in such a vis-à-vis with his double was not simply Neal's status as a writer, but fundamental questions of race, nationality, and personal identity. This is why he is still mistaking himself for Hunter in 1869.

We might say that Americans in the 1820s were belated twice over, having direct access neither to the aboriginal authenticity embodied in the Indians of the continent, nor to the original authenticity of the English culture from which they (or least Americans like Neal) derived. Much of the cultural work of the early national and antebellum periods is dedicated to

managing this belatedness, or overcoming it: the "Logan" of Neal's novel, to take a relevant example, is no longer British and no longer Indian, but something beyond both. Of course, in Neal's novel, everyone dies, so "Logan" is no longer even *alive*: rather, as I have argued elsewhere, the novel unleashes a force of deterritorialization that ultimately affects even language itself. The value of originality inhering in the talismanic name Logan—a name that has drawn into it the contending versions of originality represented by English and native alike—has been so thoroughly volatilized by Neal's imagination that it no longer indexes a living person. But for that very reason *it is deathless*—and in a sense safely beyond the question of priority and belatedness.

Neal's vitiation of the values of authenticity and priority conforms to what Harold Bloom calls the "American Religion," a species of mythopoesis that asserts that what "is best and oldest in us goes back well before Creation, and so is not part of the Creation."[22] This vision of a deathless, because uncreated, self feeds into the grandiosity of the language of American freedom, "an element imbued by the loneliness of belated American time, and the American experience of the abyss of space."[23] We might call this dream vision, in which a sovereign self expands into a time that is no longer historical and a space that is no longer bounded, a specifically American sublime. Bloom's astonishing recasting of what has become so boringly domesticated as American individualism suggests a more precise term might be "Counter-Sublime." The relation to priority I am suggesting Neal adopts might be understood as an operation of "Daemonization," the fourth of Bloom's once-famous "revisionary ratios." "Daemonization" marks a "movement towards a personalized Counter-Sublime, in reaction to the precursor's Sublime." To "Daemonize" that which one follows is not to reject or to repudiate it; on the contrary, the "daemon," as Bloom borrows the concept from Neoplatonic usage, is precisely what is passed on from the precursor, an "intermediary being, neither divine nor human," a species of "power," but crucially one that "does not belong to the parent proper, but to a range of being just beyond that precursor."[24] A great deal of the early national (romantic) treatment of that most sublime of precursors, the Indian, could be described as such an act of "Daemonization," a strategy of reaching back behind the aboriginal in order to access the power that exists in a "range of being just beyond that precursor." Obviously such a claim cannot be substantiated here: so let me merely return to Neal's engagement with Hunter, and with his English supporters, and suggest that what we see here is a kind of Daemonization leading to a "personalized Counter-Sublime."

"I am a native American. I would have the title respected," writes Neal.[25] "Native" here does not mean Indian, of course, but it doesn't entirely *not* mean it, either. Native is a switch word in this context, which can be inflected according to Neal's needs to lever open a space between the English and the Indian. To be "native" is to access power of place, a species of power "just beyond" the precursor Indian. (One way Hunter did Neal one better was by occupying this proximity even more thoroughly: by being a "white Indian," Hunter was closer to the power of the native, while still not falling into the status of doomed precursor). "Savages" has a similar ambiguity. When Neal ventriloquizes the London admirers of Hunter, he has them exclaim, "How truly a North American savage! How altogether above the parade

of savages, who go to court in their own hide and feathers!"[26] Racialization never wholly leaves the scene here, but it needs to be noted that the more "truly" savage figure here is not the one in feathers, but the comprehensively "North American" one in evening wear.

The idea that white Americans can come to resemble the "native" "savages" with whom they share a continent is a perspective that finds a range of expressions throughout the nineteenth century. Writing of the "anglophilia" animating much black abolitionist discourse at mid-century, Elisa Tamarkin summarizes the thinking: "There is no middle ground between 'slave' and 'English,' because there is no appreciable means of discriminating, from the vantage of 'aristocratic refinement,' between Americans of either race, all of whom are rude and rough, and go to England." But the ambiguity could be turned around, and exploited in other ways. [27] When Neal addresses why Hunter made no impression in America before he had become celebrated in England, he suggests it is due to a certain everyday relation to savages: "The people of this country had never seen, what we see every day in America, savages bursting from the solitude—savages when they first appear—but, like their own rivers, growing beautiful as they approached the light." If Hunter is likened to one of the "savages bursting from the solitude," it is not because he is Indian (he never claims he is); rather, he is one of a type "to be met with every day in America; people who have educated themselves, or been educated, in a very little time." In other words, people like Neal himself. Finally, Neal turns the capacity of a term like "savage" to signify beyond race against the very philanthropic delusions of Hunter's supporters: "If cash is to be given away, it had better be given away to the poor of Great Britain, or to the savages of Great Britain."[28] These are the last words of the article.

In Samuel Goodrich's *The Token*, his gift book for 1831, there appeared an odd piece titled "The Adventurer—by J. Neal?," the preface for which ran as follows:

> We give the following article as it was received. Whether it is a genuine piece of autobiography from the pen of John Dunn HUNTER himself, or only a probable sketch of his life by some one who knew him well, we leave to the reader's decision. It came to us in a handwriting much resembling that of our friend, J. NEAL. Should it prove to have been written by him, that would, in our opinion contribute rather to strengthen than diminish its authority, as he has had better opportunities than any other man, to learn the real history of the singular individual to which it refers. Ed.[29]

Once again, we see Neal leveraging a distinction circumstantial and substantial truth: if the text we have before us is, in fact, a charade, the "editor" reasons, if Neal has written Hunter's autobiography, that in fact recommends its veracity. Hunter's life is at once vacated and retained, and Neal's writerly agency is neither denied nor confirmed, but asserted all the more imperiously for that. We have Neal's usual assertion that truth functions independently of the manner of its assertion: "'Murder will out,' they say; and I believe it. The truth must be told by somebody or other, be the consequences what they may." As "Hunter" tells his story, very much along the lines that Neal had speculated it developed in his *Monthly Magazine* article, we are reminded of a distinction dear to Neal: although as "Hunter's" story gets embellished by his eager audience to the point that he "hardly knew it as his own," he also insists that "the stories all told were *substantially* true."[30]

At one level, "The Adventurer" is merely an attempt by both Goodrich and Neal to cash in on the latter's acquaintance with Neal. At a deeper level, however, it is an example of Neal's

ongoing elaboration of a form of self-assertion, a "personalized Counter-Sublime" erected on the "Daemonization" of Hunter and all he stood for. In this form of self-making, literary projection is cognate with the species of sovereign assertion visible in the philanthropist and the filibuster. All such ways of projecting power become one in this April Fool's joke (the piece is signed April 1, 1830), all are instances of "The Adventurer." Hunter is no "white Indian" in this piece, but a New England boy trained in the arts of self-aggrandizement and public humbug celebrated in Neal's biography of Neal in "American Writers": there he had been taught to how to "sell tape—lie—cheat—swear—and pass counterfeit money," while here his ruse is the selling of "soft soder" in his father's tinware business. Hunter is presented as a dreamer of imperial ambitions from early on—from his fishing perch in Massachusetts, we are told, he could cast his line "either into Vermont or New Hampshire," which "single fact" made him an adventurer[31]—and these ambitions reach a crescendo in the final paragraph:

> I am trying to make up my mind whether I should cut a canal from the Atlantic to the Pacific, revolutionize Texas, or bring about a confederation of the tribes mentioned above—an event the philanthropists and philosophers of England had begun to calculate on from my operations, as a check for the incredible growth of the United States, and a proper balance of power in the New World; how, after a variety of adventures, among which a second visit to Mr. Jefferson ought to be remembered, I got back among the natives that wear feathers and scalps? Or would you have me relate, how, after a world of expostulation, I got four chiefs of some notoriety to sign a paper which I prepared for them, according to my best knowledge of what a proclamation should be; or how we kicked up a little revolutionary dust, which ended by my being taken prisoner by the government of Mexico, and put to death. I shall do no such thing. All these details may be found in the newspapers of the day. And here I throw aside the pen forever—appealing once more from the unjust and cruel judgment of this age, to that of posterity.
>
> J.D.H. April 1 1830.[32]

The conceit here is that Hunter never did all these things, they are the fabrication of the "newspapers of the day," and that he is in fact safely returned to New England having taken up again his real name (J. Neal?). But even Neal does not believe that conceit: he had no reason to think reports of Hunter's death were anything but true. With that in mind, we might say that "J.D.H." makes his "appeal" to "posterity" from beyond the grave. Hunter "throw[s] aside the pen forever" only after he was "put to death," and such a situation ratifies what Neal has been striving for right along, namely a position beyond the finitude of history, a stance from which the precursor's "substantial" truth and power can be wrested from his "circumstantial" priority, and asserted as one's own. That is what it means to be an "adventurer" in America, and what Hunter taught Neal before he disappeared into Neal's own autobiography.

NOTES

1. John Neal, *Wandering Recollections of a Somewhat Busy Life: An Autobiography* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1869), 270–71.

2. I refer here to two of Lacan's more famous aphorisms. The idea that a "letter always reaches its destination" is first broached in his analysis of Poe's "The Purloined Letter," in his second seminar. See *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–55*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: Norton, 1988), 205. In "Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," Lacan asserts: "it is from Speech that Truth receives the mark that establishes it in a fictional structure." See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 306.

3. The best and fullest treatment both of Hunter's life and career, and of Neal's relationship to him, can be found in Richard Drinnon, *White Savage: The Case of John Dunn Hunter* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972). The information about Neal's

and Hunter's boardinghouse is on 26.

4. J.N. [John Neal], "Mr. John Dunn Hunter; the Hero of Hunter's Captivity Among the Indians, &c.," *Monthly Magazine* V (May–August 1826): 317–43, quote from 320.

5. John Neal, *American Writers: A Series of Papers Contributed to Blackwood's Magazine* (1824–1825), ed. Fred Lewis Pattee (Durham: Duke University Press, 1937), 155, 153, 169.

6. Ibid., 47.

7. Neal, *American Writers*, 118, 133, 134

8. For this part of the story, see Drinnon, chapter 9.

9. Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800–1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 40.

10. Ibid., 40.

11. *American Mercury*, 23 no. 2240 (June 5, 1827), 1.

12. *The New-Hampshire Sentinel*, 23 no. 24, (June 15, 1827), 4.

13. Part II of Drinnon's *White Savage* goes into great detail about these essays—by Lewis Cass and others, including Neal himself—and the responses they occasioned.

14. Resendez, *Changing National Identities*, 40.

15. Neal, *American Writers*, 166.

16. I have written at length about Logan and Jefferson, and Logan and Neal: see Jonathan Elmer, *On Lingering and Being Last: Race and Sovereignty in the New World* (Fordham University Press: 2008), chapters four and five. An excellent treatment of Logan can also be found in Gordon M. Sayre, *The Indian Chief as Tragic Hero: Native Resistance and the Literatures of America, from Moctezuma to Tecumseh* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), chapter 5.

17. Neal, "Mr. John Dunn Hunter," 341.

18. Ibid., 321, 323, 322.

19. Ibid., 343.

20. Ibid., 318.

21. Neal, *Wandering Reflections*, 153.

22. Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 103.

23. Bloom, *American Religion*, 103.

24. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 15.

25. Neal on Hunter 319.

26. Ibid., 320, 330, 329, 343.

27. Elisa Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion, and Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 194. In *The Transatlantic Indian*, Kate Flint has occasion many times over to remark the self-serving ends to which the English put this ambiguity about "savages." See Flint, *The Transatlantic Indian, 1776–1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

28. Neal, "Mr. John Dunn Hunter," 339.

29. Neal, *American Writers*, 189, 204, 206, emphasis mine.

30. "The Adventurer—by J. Neal?," in *The Token: A Christmas and New Year's Present*, ed. S. G. Goodrich (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1831): 189–212, quote from 189.

31. Neal, *American Writers*, 194, 192.

32. Drinnon, *White Savage*, 212.